

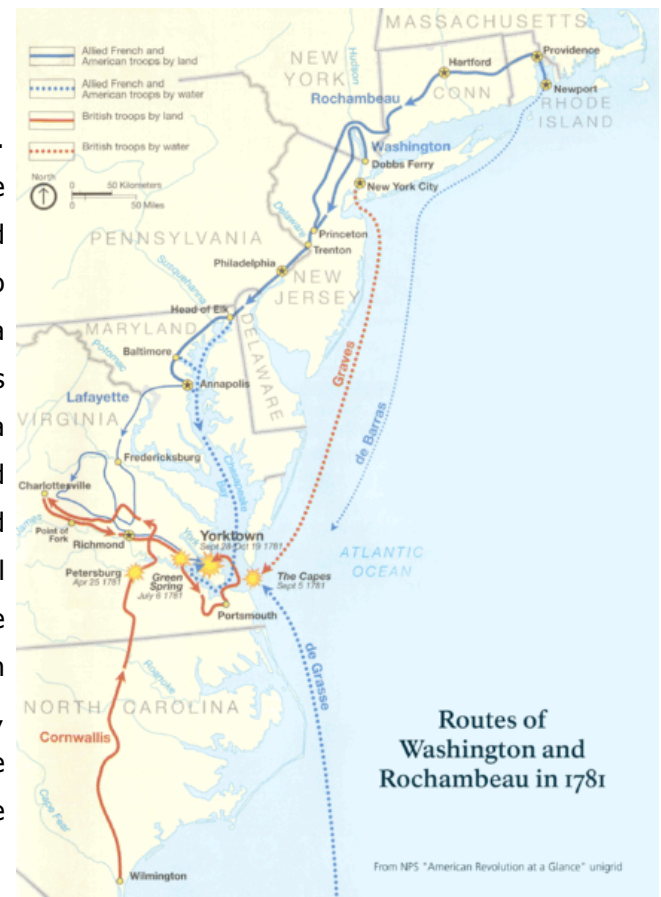
The British Surrender at Yorktown, 1781

In the summer of 1781, after six years of war, the American Army was struggling. The British occupied New York City. A second British army lead by General Lord Cornwallis ravaged the South - capturing Charleston, Richmond, and apparently was heading for the Chesapeake Bay. **Mutiny** (turning against your leader) plagued the American army in New York and New Jersey.

The Battle of Yorktown	
The Numbers	
Troops:	
British	9,700
American & French	17,000
Ships:	
French Fleet	24 Ships
British Fleet	19 Ships
Casualties (approximate):	
American	20 dead, 56 wounded
French	52 dead, 134 wounded
British	600 dead & wounded

There was a glimmer of hope, however. The French, allied with the Americans since 1778, had landed six thousand troops in Rhode Island while the French fleet gathered in the Caribbean preparing to do battle with the British. General George Washington and the French commander, Comte de Rochambeau, met in May 1781 to plan their strategy. Washington wanted to attack the British in New York City. Rochambeau, fearful of attacking such a well fortified position and lacking confidence in the Continental Army's abilities, recommended marching south to battle Cornwallis in Virginia.

Washington finally agreed to the French position on August 22. However, Washington could not leave New York without the second half of Britain's army (led by Henry Clinton) knowing and following them. He ordered his men to build fake "forts" to convince Clinton the Continental Army were settling down for a long stay. Then, at night under the darkness, the two armies began their march from White Plains, New York to Virginia arriving in early September. As the combined American and French armies marched south, a battle between the French and British fleets in the Chesapeake Bay sealed the fate of General Cornwallis and his British troops at Yorktown. This battle in the Chesapeake (called the Battle of the Capes) was fought between the French and British navy - the French navy won! Now, Cornwallis would be cornered with nowhere to run! The Americans and French on one side and the French navy on the other!



After a five-day bombardment, the combined American and French forces attacked and overwhelmed Cornwallis's fortified position on the night of October 14. The British commander was left with no choice but to surrender, which he did on October 19. News of the surrender reached England on November 25 sending shock waves through the British government. Although King George III wanted to continue the battle, the surrender forced Prime Minister Lord North to resign in March 1782. His replacement began the peace process that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Paris in September 1783 granting independence to the American colonies.